

THE
Author's Account

OF HIS
Conversion and Call

TO THE
GOSPEL MINISTRY;
BEING AN APOLOGY FOR HIS
ITINERANT PREACHING.

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*Come and hear all ye that fear GOD,
and I will declare what he hath done
for my Soul.*

DAVID knowing how the Wicked are often disposed to scoff and make a jest of Religion, and how they trample the most valuable pearls under their feet, seems to pass them over, and calls only up the Saints to hear his relation of what God had done for him ; and this not to exalt himself, but the free grace of him who worketh in all his people to will and to do of his good pleasure.

My design is to declare to God's people what I humbly hope and trust the Lord hath, in infinite mercy, done for my soul.

I readily acknowledge that I was totally ruined in the first *Adam*, and that there is no recovery but through the second Adam, who is the Lord from heaven. I was born in sin and shapen in iniquity ; my heart is by nature full of enmity to God, and naturally in me there dwelleth no good thing. I was full of that principle of sin which must have rendred me miserable to all Eternity, if the free
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grace of God in Jesus Christ had not superabounded.

Early I went astray from God, and most presumptuously dar'd to wander in the broad road to destruction. More than twenty of my first years I lived without God in the world ; during which time I received several very remarkable deliverances, when my life was in most imminent danger. It was by nothing short of repeated miracles of grace I was kept out of hell. I broke the most solemn vows, made in sickness,—I griev'd away God's Spirit,—I lived a poor life ; indeed I was a chief of sinners ; until God was pleased, in great mercy, to lead me first to an external reformation.

In my nineteenth year I entred Yale-College, and took upon me a solemn profession of religion, from which time I constantly attended the holy ordinance of the Lord's supper ;—and was kept back from outward immoralities,—and often went the round of external duties. But still I remained an utter stranger to the power of godliness, until God was pleased to come, as I humbly trust, by his power and grace, and break the dominion of sin in my soul.

This ever memorable season to me was in the year 1764. in the 23d of my age, and 3d at College. In the beginning of this year I determined to follow the civil law, for I judg'd myself unconverted and not fit to preach the gospel. And besides, this appeared the most probable way to honour

honour and preferment. And I had some hopes of making my salvation coincide with a prosperous calling, which I apprehended would be doubly advantageous.—Having come to this determination, I did in some measure apply myself to the study of the law until the 17th day of June.

This Lord's day evening, having attended a religious conference after divine service, I was led to consider on the state of mind I was in. I saw plainly that my heart was not right with God. I found that holy time had always been a burden to me, and that in the solemn worship of God I had no delight. And from a sense of my sinfulness, which even attended my best performances, I determined that I was in danger of immediate damnation, and that if I then drop'd dead, I must unavoidably drop into hell. I had often fear'd this was my case, but now I gave in to it with my whole soul that it must be so.

This night, I came to a full resolution that I would lay aside all other things and seek after salvation ;—that I would turn my back to the riches, honours and pleasures of the world, and set out for heaven. I determined that, If I must perish, I had as good perish without the world as with it. And I was perswaded that, unless I let the world go, I should never take hold on heaven ; but if I let it go and sought for heaven, there was a possibility I might obtain ; and I resolved to try this possibility to the utmost. And seeing the perfidy of some, who professed friendship, I could not forbear saying
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with the Roman Orator, *O Dii Immortales, ubinam gentium sumus !* I was struck sick of the favour and applaude of men, it was so uncertain. But I determined to seek the friendship of One who should never forsake me. Now I saw that if I went back it was certain death, and though I attempted to go forward, yet there was great danger of coming short ; but the *may be* that I should obtain supported me from utter despair.

From this time I began to be convinced of my miserable state and need of help, more than I ever had been before. I had formerly been greatly concerned in times of danger, but as soon as the danger was over my concern was gone, and my vows were soon forgot ; but now I was in full life, and I saw no danger around me except that my sins continually exposed me to the wrath of an angry God.

And now, for near four weeks, it seemed I must make or break for eternity soon. I was ready to fear this was the last time that ever God would call. Sometimes I compared myself to a condemned criminal going to prison, and from prison to execution. I felt the sentence of death in myself, and I was ready to say, O my sins, my wilful sins ! It seems I must die ! I have not the least claim to divine mercy ! And if I was alone with my Bible, this was a very uncomfortable book to me, for I was the mark to which all it's woes were pointed, and I saw not one promise for me. But I searched out God's merciful dealings to others,
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How he delivered Israel when they cried to him at the red sea ;—How he accepted a wicked Manassah ;—How he received a returning Prodigal, and pardon'd a Thief on the cross. And I pleaded that God would display the like mercy upon me. Sometimes I attempted to plead with the Cyrophenician women, Lord let me be a dog if I may but eat of the crumbs that fall from thy table ! But all my pleadings afforded me no comfort ; I apprehended I was still as much exposed to the divine wrath as ever.

Hearing an eminent saint mention his confidence in God and readiness to die, I was perswaded that others felt something in godliness that I was a stranger to. O I thought I would have given a thousand worlds to be so happy ! I envied them more than I did Kings upon their thrones. When I read the triumph of Martyrs in the flames, it convinced me that I was a stranger to their religion. And what I should do, it called to suffer martyrdom, I knew not ; but found myself all unwilling to burn for Christ, and all unprepared too. Now I resolved to live as upright as I could, though I should only procure a cooler place in hell by it. But I found that all I could do came infinitely short of answering the purpose ; it neither satisfied God's broken law, nor quieted my guilty conscience. But I deserved to be damned ; and to hell I must go if the Lord did not have mercy on me.—I often wished in the bitterness of my soul, that I had never been born. I could say, O happy birds, happy brutes ! When you die, there
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is an end of your misery ; but I shall live to all eternity, I fear to be a monument of divine wrath.

Sometimes I retired from College to a solitary field, and spent the day in prayer and fasting. I thought, if God's mercies could not draw me, I wished God would send some sore rod that should drive me to him. O methought I could rejoice to suffer any thing but hell's eternal torments ! These frightened me ! I could not endure to think of going away with devils to spend a long eternity in the flaming regions of despair.

Sometimes I felt a tender concern for my friends, and thought I must go home and exhort them to set out for heaven.

On the 13th day of July I made, or renewed the following resolution. *I* resolve to spend, so far as *I* am able, my whole life in the service of God, because that, and a thousand lives are his due ; and then if God is pleased to damn me, he is just. It seemed *I* could say, My soul, wait thou only on God, for my expectation is from him. When *I* read of pressing into the kingdom of heaven, it seemed that *I* was the person, and *I* was some encouraged to press forward. *I* could say, O may the Lord never suffer me to give over seeking ; who knows but *I* may obtain mercy, though it should be in the last hour of my life !

On the 14th of July, it being the Lord's day, *I* felt some unusual peace and quiet in my soul ; *I* enjoyed some sweet contemplations on the divine attributes.

attributes. This was first perceived in prayer. My mind was comfortable for a season, and then again it was beclouded, but still I determined to follow on to know the Lord. It seemed I hardly knew what these things should mean while I pondered them in my heart. I had such an earnest desire for the salvation of others, that I could not lie down until I had invited them to set out with me for heaven. My arguments I thought must persuade every rational being.

The next morning, as I was walking in a solitary field, I came to this full and hearty resolution, That I would venture all upon the seas for Christ ; though my bark was slender, and the seas rough with storms and rocks, yet I was constrained to push off, and venture all, one time, to go to Christ. I thought it was time to make or break for eternity, and I should never have a fairer prospect for winning than now. Some part of this day, heaven appeared too great a blessing to be bestowed on such an undeserving worm as I am. This passage dwelt with great sweetness in my mind. *When Zion traveled she brought forth.*

But in the evening my soul was ravished with a view of God's wonderful grace and mercy in Jesus Christ ! My soul went out after God. His glory appeared in all his works of nature and grace. I was astonished that I had been so insensible of it ! My soul was full ! I lay down and thought I could hold no more. I had such a soul-ravishing view of God and holiness, and the way of salvation by Christ, that I was further from sleep than ever I had been before. My thoughts sometimes flow'd in this channel. O how glorious it

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is to keep all God's commands !—to live devoted to his service ; this shall be my happiness to all eternity. O, if call'd to it, *I* now can cheerfully suffer all the torments of men and devils for the cause of my glorious Lord. But soon my joys were mix'd with a sharp distress for my friends, and for all mankind, who are out of Christ. O *I* long'd to have them leave the vanities of the world and go to heaven with me ! Now one precious soul appear'd of more value than a thousand worlds. *I* was now willing, if God call'd me, to spend and be spent in warning sinners to fly from wrath, and escape to Jesus Christ. Now it pleas'd an infinitely gracious God to give me an earnest desire to enter on the Gospel Ministry ; preaching Christ, and gathering souls into his kingdom, seem'd infinitely more desirable than to hold the empire of the world ; and if it were God's will *I* wish'd to go to the ends of the earth and preach 'till *I* died — *I* had sweet views of death, judgment and a glorious eternity. Verily this night seem'd like a time of refreshing from the presence of the Lord.

The next morning the works of God all around me appeared wonderfully glorious, and my soul was fill'd with sweet contemplations on divine things, and the holy Scriptures seem'd to unfold to view wonderful and glorious realities, that *I* had never such a sense of before. And, while *I* enjoy'd these contemplations, *I* thought myself infinitely more rich and happy than if *I* possess'd all the gold of *Potosa*. Thus my soul continued peaceful and joyous, near two days, 'till *I* fell into great darkness and tears again. But let me speak
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it for the glory of God, He hath often been graciously pleased to shine into my soul the light of his reconciled countenance, and to afford me that peace the world cannot give, and that love which many waters cannot quench.

About this time *I* went home, and seriously intreated many of my dear friends and former acquaintances to set out with me for heaven.

And, after *I* returned to College, *I* had such an unutterable desire for the salvation of my gay young friends there, that *I* thought *I* could, if possible, have taken them in my arms and carried them through the bowels of hell and death, if their precious souls might be landed on the shores of bliss. These things lay with such weight upon my mind, that one day, after noon-recitation, *I* publicly invited all my Class Mates to favour me with a visit in the afternoon, if it were agreeable. These sprightly youth soon understood what sort of an entertainment they were like to have. And *I* believe *I* was not misinformed, when *I* was told that this struck many with a serious surprize.

Accordingly, in the afternoon, a considerable number came in to see me. *I* soon let them know my sentiments about religion, and where *I* thought the main body of the world were going,—and the infinite danger of our being lost with them. The substance of what *I* offer'd was in the method of plain conversation, as follows.

Gentlemen, *I* don't know how you will be pleased with my entertainment, perhaps you will think it uncommon, but *I* offer it as the best *I* have, whether you will accept of it, or not. For some time past *I* have had a great desire to open my

mind to you about our immortal interest.—I don't mean to take on me to be your teacher, nor do I now reprove any of you in particular ; but I long to speak to you about the salvation of our souls. It may be some will despise me for this, but if you tread me under your feet it shall not hinder my speaking what I know to be truth, and of infinite importance to you and me. You know, my friends, we are all hastening into the eternal world ! Pray let us consider of what importance it is that we should now get Christ Jesus formed in our souls. If this is not done speedily, the time may soon be too late. I am persuaded that nothing short of having real holiness in our hearts can fit us for heaven. You know that I have some time ago made a profession of religion, and have attended the sacrament of the Lord's supper ; and I suppose that some of you thought I was acquainted with real godliness ; but I assure you I was ignorant of it ; I was an utter stranger to that religion, which I now see the Bible points out. I find that the only way to come to Christ is to part with every thing for him and take him as our only portion ; and there is no possibility of receiving Christ any other way. And what good will the riches, honours and pleasures of the world do us presently, when we come to die, if we have no Christ to save us ? Had we not better leave our pursuit after these things and seek earnestly for the salvation of our souls ? If we loose the world and obtain heaven, we shall be infinite gainers. And if we should be damn'd, we had better be damn'd without the world than with it ; seeing it will only sink us deeper in hell, and all our abus'd enjoyments will
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aggravate our ruin to eternity. Why then shall we damn our souls for that which will finally inrage the flames of hell upon us ? Do let us run the venture one time. We shall never repent it. What if we are despised while we live ? That will be no matter to us, by and by, when you and I are dead. Our dust will then be as good as the dust of Kings. All the present distinctions of honour are only for a moment ; there will be no distinction in the resurrection. O, if we would be wise, let us strive to enter into the kingdom of heaven ; it is the violent that take it. And if we are so happy as to obtain this we have all ; but if we loose it, and have all the world we are miserable ; for in the resurrection day this world shall be burnt up. O how dreadful for us to loose our souls !—Better for us if we had never been born ! Our salvation is so unspeakably great that it is worth seeking all our days, though we should not obtain it 'till the last hour of our lives, and then should obtain but the lowest place in heaven.—And, great as this salvation is, it may be obtained. I hope that I, who have been as great a sinner as any of you, have been enabled, through grace, to obtain. And now I would not part with my salvation for ten thousand worlds.—Nor would I for every thing run the risque of it again, as I have done before.

Don't let us hope to find happiness out of Christ ; we shall surely be mistaken. I once tho't to seek these things in an honest way, and then I would add Christ to them, and so make up a portion with the world and Christ together : But I see this is the way to be damn'd eternally ; Christ will never be our portion 'till we part with all for Him ; and
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this he has told us plainly. O what will it be to perish ! The world are not going to heaven, in the course they are now in,—they are surely going to destruction, and I have long been going with them. But now I am perswaded that none but those that stem the current of the world are going to heaven ; and we shall soon find it so. None will go to heaven but they that have the white stone, and in the stone a new name written which no man knoweth, save he that receiveth it.

I don't condemn any of you whose external conduct is morally good,—God only knows the heart ; but this I know, that moral conduct without a moral heart will never lead us to heaven. Many of you doubtless own that my conduct, in the main, has been morally good, since you knew me at this College ; but I was in the way to hell ; I knew nothing about any heart-felt religion, and why it is that God now makes these discoveries to me I know not. I have been as wicked as any of you, and deserv'd his wrath.

I purpose now to set out and take my journey towards the heavenly Zion : And as for you, that are willing to go with me, I am heartily glad of your company. O my dear Class-Mates, nothing would rejoice me so much ! I long that we may all set out and go together ! It breaks my heart to think of leaving one of you to perish in the world's impending ruin. I suppose some of you think, as I should once have thought, that I am crazy, and talk mad ; but I assure you, I am not,—I am now in my right mind ;—I used to be mad and crazy before this ; but now I act according to right reason,—and what I have spoken is not from any sudden passion, but it is the solemn apprehension of things that I have had

had for some weeks past. And I have often desir'd to express myself to you, while something hinder'd me. But now, if you should present a sword at my heart, I could not hold my peace. Thus I offer'd :—And blessed be God there were some who faithfully seconded me !

The devil has long been a great enemy to such things.—And now whatever any persons shall think or say of me, it is very immaterial : To God I stand or fall ;—but this I think, and this I say : After seven years of calm and mature consideration, I am confirmed in the same opinion I was of then. I still think as I then thought. I still preach as I then convers'd, and this may I continue to do, while I live.

O blessed be the Lord that ever I was born, that I was born to hear the gospel's joyful sound ! And more abundantly that ever my heart was bowed to receive it. O blessed be the Lord for that memorable month (to me) of July, in the year 1764. That was the glorious year, that was the blessed month (though I cannot fix upon the day) in which I humbly hope salvation was brought to my soul.

And now may the Lord be abundantly praised for that most desirable and glorious employment, to which he hath been graciously pleased to call so unworthy a creature, even to preach the everlasting gospel of his own dear Son.

Being called, as I humbly trust, by the holy spirit, I was solemnly set apart to this great work by prayer and fasting and the laying on of the hands of the presbytery ; which was on the 12th day of June, A. D. 1766.

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O my leanness ! My leanness ! How insufficient am I for these things ? But, if ever I have been honoured to be instrumental of good to any, I pray that Christ, by whose power this good was effected, may have all the glory and praise forever.

And as I have been marvelously continued from the grave, and am yet suffered to go on in this calling of callings, may it be my daily employment while I live ! And may the Lord that hath called me of his own free grace, make me faithful unto the death !

This, my dear friends, you will please to accept of as my humble apology for taking all opportunities to preach the everlasting gospel at home and abroad.

And I do earnestly crave the prayers of God's people, to whom I humbly address this discourse, that I, who can do nothing of myself, may be strengthened and own'd of God in this great work. Sometimes the word of the Lord is like a fire in my bones, and I can have no rest 'till I deliver it. If any people are mad and crazy, it is those that have never been *New Born*. I hope my friends who dislike my relation are willing to give a better.

Now to God that made us, to Christ that redeem'd us, to the Holy Ghost that sanctifieth us, One God, be ascribed by all in heaven, and by all in earth, constant, ardent and eternal praises, world without end ! A M E N.

Enfield, March,
A. D. 1772.
